

United States Attorney's Office
Southern District of New York
One St. Andrews Plaza
New York, NY 10007

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT
USAO# 2015R00380
VIN 4710246
Court Docket # 15-CR-00136

Sir/Madam,

I did not originally plan to file a victim impact statement, but in light of information of which I only became aware on June 24, I am compelled to relate these recent events to the court.

As a journalist who has written extensively about the Church of Scientology for 20 years, for at least the past five years I have been a target of private investigators hired by Scientology. When I was notified that I had been victimized by Mr. Saldarriaga, a private investigator, it fit a pattern.

On June 8, my attorney, Scott Pilutik, wrote to Mr. Saldarriaga's attorney, Peter Brill, to ask whether Mr. Saldarriaga's client was in fact the Church of Scientology (letter attached hereto as Exhibit A). Mr. Brill phoned my attorney the following day, and told him that Mr. Saldarriaga's client was the father of a missing person, Jay Banarjee, whom I don't know. Mr. Brill assured my attorney that Mr. Saldarriaga was not working on behalf of Scientology.

Then, on June 24, Michael Rinder contacted me and informed me that he had received a letter from the Dept of Justice which indicated that he too had been a victim of Mr. Saldarriaga. Mr. Rinder, who lives in Florida, was once Scientology's international spokesman and, since leaving the organization in 2007, has become a target of intense surveillance and harassment by Scientology's private investigators, much like myself. We were both prominently featured in the recent HBO documentary about Scientology, "Going Clear."

In light of Mr. Rinder's revelation, it seems quite clear that Mr. Saldarriaga lied, through his attorney, about the identity of his client, and that he did indeed commit the offense to which he pled guilty on behalf of the Church of Scientology. It would strain credulity to accept that Mr. Saldarriaga's targeting of Michael Rinder and myself was coincidental, given that we are both high profile targets of Scientology's surveillance and harassment campaigns.

I would therefore like to draw the court's attention to Mr. Rinder's victim impact statement (VIN 4710211), and suggest reviewing his in concert with my own.

Mr. Rinder, in a videotaped statement for another documentary, explained that private investigators who work for Scientology are trained to give the names of middle men they are

hired by. So a private investigator might say that he works for an attorney named Elliot Abelson, or for the Florida firm of Terry Roffler and Associates. Both are intermediaries who hire private investigators on behalf of various corporate entities of the Church of Scientology. For that reason, Mr. Saldarriaga should be pressed to give up information about his clients with more vigor than may have already been applied.

Mr. Saldarriaga's crime was intended to do me harm and cripple my ability to do my job. It is not a reach to say that Mr. Saldarriaga's offense against me is also an attack on the First Amendment, given the chill that would result if journalists such as myself caved in to Scientology's harassment campaign.

Time and space forbid my recounting the entirety of Scientology's surveillance and harassment campaign against me, but one example is something I revealed in the movie "Going Clear." During an intense "noisy" investigation of me, which involved intimidating visits of my close friends, family, or former colleagues, Scientology's private investigator David Lubow made two separate unannounced visits to my mother's home in California. Each of them left her shaken and scared, which was their intended effect.

It is disturbing that I have been given no information about the extent of Mr. Saldarriaga's access to me, and for whom he was working, given that Mr. Brill's representations on behalf of Mr. Saldarriaga were evidently not truthful. Sentencing Mr. Saldarriaga without pressing him for this information would be as much a miscarriage of justice as his original crime. Whoever paid Mr. Saldarriaga should be investigated and prosecuted.

Sincerely,


Tony Ortega